

Readings Booklet

June 1995



English 33

Part B: Reading

Grade 12 Diploma Examination

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Alberta
EDUCATION



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June 1995
English 33 Part B: Reading
Readings Booklet
Grade 12 Diploma Examination

Description

Part B: Reading contributes 50% of the total English 33 Diploma Examination mark.

There are 8 reading selections in the Readings Booklet and 70 questions in the Questions Booklet.

Time: 2 hours. You may take an additional 1/2 hour to complete the examination.

Instructions

- Be sure that you have an English 33 Readings Booklet **and** an English 33 Questions Booklet.
- You may **not** use a dictionary, thesaurus, or other reference materials.

I. Questions 1 to 10 in your Questions Booklet are based on this short story.

SUNDAYS

- She couldn't remember when he'd started lying down on Sunday afternoons. He hadn't done it when they first were married. At least not regularly. Now he seemed to do it every week, each Sunday sometime after four. She'd notice the sudden quiet in the house when he lay down, but then she would forget it, lost in some task. She'd be wiping down the woodwork, washing windows, sweeping up the hall or cooking, humming to herself and peaceful in the way she only felt when she was busy. Of all the days she liked Sundays the best. The other days went by so fast, they jumbled all together. But Sunday was long. The hours passed slowly, with dignity, like time out of her childhood. She could catch up on things she'd missed or put off all the week while she was out at work. She liked to bake on Sundays. She made pies and home-made breads or muffins. All the things he liked. She'd prepare a roast of lamb or beef or chicken with potatoes. The kitchen windows steamed up in the winter and the cooking smells spread through the whole of the little house until it was so warm and homey that it seemed to cry out for the child they'd lost, the tiny girl who'd lived only one day, whose perfect little face was still so real to her that when she thought of it her hand would fly up to her mouth, and she would sometimes throw the kitchen door wide open to the chill and let the frigid air pour into the cheerful, steamy room.
- It always took her by surprise to find him lying down. She'd be carrying up the laundry or her sewing when she'd pass the open bedroom door and see him on their bed. Sometimes she'd hurry past the door without a word as if the sight of him embarrassed her. She couldn't imagine lying down during the day doing nothing. Just the thought of it made her jumpy. If he'd only sleep, it wouldn't bother her so much. But he never did. He lay there wide awake and he looked unlike himself. Sometimes not even gazing out the window, but staring up at the empty ceiling in a way that made her think of someone very old. Yet he was only thirty-five, a burly, lively man. He looked out of place, lying so still.
- Why shouldn't the poor man rest, she told herself. He worked hard all week long. He was up before her every morning, wide awake the moment that he rose. She'd wake to the sound of him whistling in the shower and have to wrench herself up through a wall of sleep and hurry down to fix his breakfast. She'd have his orange juice fresh squeezed, his eggs done over light, his dark rye lightly buttered and his coffee steaming in his cup by the time he appeared with his briefcase in his hand.
- "I don't know why you make yourself get up. I could just as easily eat out,"

Continued

he'd said hundreds of times. She didn't have to be at work till ten.

She stood at the window when he left the house. He liked to walk the mile down town to catch the train to work. Even in winter he went off through ice or heavy snow as if the weather couldn't touch him. He had a light, springy walk for
40 someone so large. She'd never seen another man who walked exactly as he did.

He never watched t.v. or listened to the radio or read when he lay down on Sundays. His stillness and his silence fascinated her. When they went out to parties, people hurried up to greet him. They gathered all around him. He was
45 such a talker and a story teller. She was shy in groups. She never laughed or joked or became close to people at her job the way he did. He was always calling her to see if he could bring somebody home to supper. Yet when they were alone together, he was quiet. She did most of the talking, as if there were no end to all the things she'd like to tell him.

"Tom?" she said some Sundays, stopping at the bedroom door. He'd turn
50 and look at her with a little smile, never startled. He wasn't a nervous man, not at all like her. "What were you thinking about just then? You looked a million miles away." She stayed in the hall with her broom or dust cloth held tight, anxious to resume her work.

"Not anything really," he replied.
55 "You must have been thinking of *something*," she insisted. Her own mind was never still or empty. It was always focussed hard on something; something bothering her or pleasing, something coming up or in the past. It never stopped. Not even at night when she lay down to sleep. Her mind was always ticking.

"Come here," he'd say. He liked to stop her in the middle of her work.
60 "Lie down with me a minute," he would say while she stood perplexed with the broom gripped tightly in her hand.

"Come here," he'd urge her, smiling like a cat, lazy and happy, as if her irritation were amusing to him.

"Not now," she'd argue, but drawn to him and giving him her hand.
65 "Just for a minute," he would say pulling her down on the tassled spread till she rested her cheek on his great chest and felt his chin on the top of her head.

"You fit against me perfectly," he'd whisper with his arm tight around her.

"I've got a million things to do," she'd say, all wiry with thoughts and
70 wanting to jump up before the lethargy descended.

"Just lie a minute," he would say in a way that made her give in to the warmth of his shirt, his faint tobacco smell, and the silence building in the house till she could hear the birds outside so clearly and see their shapes streak by the window. The sky was violet or pink and she would feel the sweetness of the

Continued

fading room begin to lull her.

75 “You’re a devil,” she would sigh, tipping back her head to gaze at him.

 “I love you, May,” he’d say, kissing her forehead or her hair. He never
wanted to make love on Sunday afternoons. Only to hold her in the stillness for
half an hour or more until it seemed to May that a spell came over them, a heavy
sense of peace, as if the whole of life had swept away from them in a great wave
80 and they’d become as motionless and changeless as the rocking chair beside the
window, the tall white dresser and the row of pictures on the flowered wall that
grew more dim and less distinct each minute in the dusky room. She would
imagine the darkness growing in the house, filling up the unlit rooms downstairs,
the empty kitchen growing desolate and grey and disappearing, until she’d
85 suddenly jump up from the dark bed and with a beating heart she’d hurry like a
child from room to room snapping the lights on, her face urgent and serious, as if
she were preventing a great death.

Ellen Wilbur

Contemporary American writer

She has published stories in *The New Yorker* and *Redbook*.

II. Questions 11 to 17 in your Questions Booklet are based on this poem.

AT THE WEDDING

- The old farmer sits on the stage of the community hall
His feet dangle like plumb lines,¹
thick black shoes
swaying slowly to the music
- 5 His boys are on the dance floor
Their blond heads stick out in the crowd
like shafts of wheat
Five of them, the last one married today,
all of them living in different cities
- 10 He remembers each of them, fighting him,
running off to become what they are,
salesmen, doctors, city-dwellers
Even now, the old suspicion still in their faces
Quick to argue
- 15 over chores or raising children
He watches them moving in their white shirts,
their wives smiling and small children
tugging at their pant-legs
- He knows now that he loved them
- 20 impossibly, for the arguments and the hard words
for being young and insolent
like a field of stones coaxed into grain
He wonders if they love him the same way,
with hindsight, with a farmer's suspicion of elements,
- 25 the unsureness they learned from him
- He wishes now that one of them
would come and sit with him
up here on the stage,
touch his shoulder and talk
- 30 about the farm, or anything
He wishes now that he had loved them
always, as surely
as he loves them now

Andrew Wreggitt
Contemporary Canadian poet

¹plumb line — a suspended line of cord or string with a weight at the end; used to determine a vertical line

III. Questions 18 to 28 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from a play.

from MONKEYSHINES¹

DOROTHY BARTLETT is an energetic, attractive woman in her 60s. Her children have grown and left home, and two years ago her husband died. Superficially, she displays a breezy acceptance of her lot, but underneath she is struggling to come to terms with her past, her present, and her vague and lonesome future. NANCY BARTLETT, DOROTHY's unmarried daughter, lives in Boston where she has developed a mild case of urban paranoia. She tends to be overanxious about her mother.

As the scene opens, DOROTHY is striving to battle the signs of aging through dyeing her hair and exercising.

- DOROTHY** (*Doggedly skipping rope*): . . . 86 . . . 87 . . . (*The malfunctioning doorbell stutters out a feeble, crickety chirp. Then another. DOROTHY pauses, not sure if she heard something. She continues to rotate the skip rope in one hand, still counting.*) . . . 88 . . . 89 . . . 90 . . . (*Moves to check her oven timer, concerned for the dye on her hair*) No . . . I didn't think it would be time yet . . . (*Resumes skipping. A firm, determined knocking at the front door stops her dead. She looks from the door to herself, dismayed at the idea of anybody seeing her like this.*) Ooooh no . . . who in the world . . . ? (*The knocking is repeated.*)
- 10 **DELIVERY PERSON**: Anybody home?!
- DOROTHY** (*Flustered*): No! Uh . . . I mean . . . who is it?
- DELIVERY PERSON**: Delivery.
- DOROTHY**: If it's the groceries, just leave them outside the kitchen door.
- DELIVERY PERSON**: It's not groceries. It's "Tuneful Blooms."
- 15 **DOROTHY** (*Mishearing*): "Tuneful Tombs"?
- DELIVERY PERSON** (*Shouts*): BLOOMS! Flowers. Shrubs, Lawn Elves, Pink Flamingoes. "Everything to furnish the garden of your heart."
- DOROTHY**: I didn't order anything for "the garden of my heart."
- DELIVERY PERSON**: Are you Mrs. Dorothy Bartlett?
- 20 **DOROTHY**: Yes. (*Mutters*) For my sins . . .
- DELIVERY PERSON**: It's for you.
- DOROTHY**: Hold on. (*She starts for the door, but catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror and decides extreme measures are called for, and ducks behind the coat-closet door. Calls*) Come in. It's open.

Continued

¹Monkeyshines—(slang) playful mischief

- 25 **DELIVERY PERSON** (*Steps in and looks around*): Where are you?
DOROTHY (*Shielding herself with the door*): Here. (**DELIVERY PERSON** *starts to step around it. DOROTHY recoils.*) No! . . . I mean . . . just leave—what is it?
DELIVERY PERSON: Gift.
DOROTHY (*Surprised*): Oh . . .
- 30 **DELIVERY PERSON**: And a greeting. (*Assumes a stance and sings at the door*)
Happy Birthday to you,
Happy Birthday to you,
Have a nice day, Dorothy Bartlett,
Says this Tuneful Bloom to you!
- 35 You have to sign for it. (*Produces a pad and pen*)
DOROTHY (*Snakes an arm around the closet door to take them*): Thank you . . .
(*Hesitates*) It's not a plastic lawn elf, is it?
DELIVERY PERSON: House plant.
DOROTHY: Good. (*Hands the pen and signed form back*)
- 40 **DELIVERY PERSON**: I'll put it right inside the front door. (*He exits and returns momentarily, hauling a huge pot which contains two formidably ancient cacti. One is six feet tall and very authoritative; its companion is the size and shape of a prize-winning fall fair pumpkin. Both are abundantly furnished with sharp thorns and long white hair. A ribbon surrounds the*
- 45 *pot. A card, and a label with feeding instructions hang from one thorn.*)
DOROTHY (*After a few moments*): Are you still there?
DELIVERY PERSON: No. I'm gone. (*Exits. DOROTHY emerges cautiously. Sees the plant; shrieks and ducks for cover in the closet, and recovers herself.*)
DOROTHY: It's got to be a mistake. (*Diving around the plant*) Wait! Hold on!
- 50 Don't go! (*Sound of departing delivery van tells her it's too late. She must confront the plant.*) You're a tuneful bloom? You're striking a sour note with me. (*Trying to shift the pot away from the door*) . . . Unh . . . ah . . .
(*Gets pricked*) Ow! (*Gives up*) Think about it tomorrow, Scarlett.² Oh . . . a card. (*Unable to read it, even at arm's length*) Where are my dratted
- 55 glasses? (*Hunting them when the phone rings; answers*) Hullo? . . .
(*Smiles*) Nancy, how sweet. That's my second *happy birthday* and I'm not even dressed yet. (*Dismisses NANCY's reply with a self-conscious laugh*)
Nancy! What an idea. I'm not dressed because I'm doing my exercises . . . I always do them when I'm half awake. If I were fully conscious, I'd realize
- 60 it's a lost cause. Let me put you on this speaker thingummy (*Flicks the switch*) so I can finish.
NANCY (*In mid-protest, blares out*): Momma, don't!

Continued

²Think about it tomorrow, Scarlett—an often-repeated line from the novel *Gone with the Wind*. The protagonist is Scarlett O'Hara.

DOROTHY (*Flinches*): Why not? It's not painful. (*Turns it down as she rubs an ear*) Not to you anyway.

65 **NANCY**: You wander away —
DOROTHY: Fiddlesticks . . . (*Wanders away to retrieve her skip rope*) I don't . . .
NANCY: I can't hear half what you say. It's like talking to thin air.
DOROTHY (*Pinches her midriff*): Would that it were . . .
NANCY: Please sit down and talk to me.

70 **DOROTHY** (*Positions herself near the speaker and resumes skipping*): If I sit down, I'll never get up. And I'm not far from 100. (*Counting*) 91 . . . 92 . . .
NANCY: Momma, you're decades away from 100.
DOROTHY: Skips, baby. Not years. (*Eyes the plant*) Nancy, somebody just

75 walked in the front door and—
NANCY: Oh. You have company?
DOROTHY: Company? Me? (*Finishes skipping and begins a new exercise*) I never set eyes on the person before—
NANCY (*Apprehensive*): A stranger? Just walked in?

80 **DOROTHY**: Yes, With a . . . a . . .
NANCY (*Worried*): With a what, Momma?
DOROTHY (*Searching for words*): I . . . I can only call it a . . .
NANCY (*Completely misunderstanding*): Momma, stay calm!
DOROTHY: I'm calm, Nancy. But I don't know what to make of it.

85 **NANCY**: Let me handle this. (*Blusters through the speaker*) Now listen to me, whoever you are. I'm hanging up right now and calling the police. And you'd better—
DOROTHY (*Begins to understand and is amused*): Nancy, what good will that do? You're in Boston.

90 **NANCY** (*Panicky*): Momma! Don't tell him that! (*To the imagined intruder*) Now hear this. I'm calling long distance so you'd better clear off.
DOROTHY (*To the cactus*): Get that, ya big lug?
NANCY: Momma, *don't* antagonize him.
DOROTHY: Honey, baby, there's nobody here.

95 **NANCY**: He's threatening you, isn't he? Does he have a weapon?
DOROTHY (*Breaking up*): He has thorns. They both have thorns.
NANCY: What? Thorns . . . ? Omigod . . . did you say *both*?!
DOROTHY: Nancy . . . Nancy . . . I'm okay. I'm fine. There's nobody. You've lived too long in the city. I got a little paranoid myself when we used to live

100 in New York.
NANCY: Momma, what are you talking about?

Continued

DOROTHY: I'm talking about a delivery that came.

NANCY (*Distrusting*): Is this the truth? I know you, Momma. You're not above lying to protect yourself.

105 DOROTHY (*A little stung*): Nancy, there is nobody here.

NANCY (*Relieved*): Oooh, Momma, you gave me such a fright.

DOROTHY: I'm sorry.

NANCY: You keep so much to yourself since you moved back there. Who'd know if you needed help.

110 DOROTHY (*Piqued*):³ If you want a real fright, Nancy, you should see what was delivered. It looks like it crawled up from the bottom of the lake. It looks like a . . . a big, hairy . . . baseball bat.

NANCY: Who'd send you a baseball bat?

DOROTHY: I don't know. I've mislaid my glasses and can't read the card. It's
115 hard to believe it was meant as a gift.

NANCY: Did you get mine?

DOROTHY: Goodness, not yet. Your birthday's not till December.

NANCY: Not for me. From me. I sent you something by Interflora.

DOROTHY: Inter . . . (*Looks at the plant*) . . . flora? Oooh. What . . . is it?

120 NANCY: I don't know. I said I want something Extra Special, and I sort of described you and asked them to send something suitable.

DOROTHY: How did you describe—No, no. Least said, soonest mended.

NANCY: I hate to think of you alone on your birthday.

DOROTHY (*Eyes the plant*): I may never be alone again.

125 NANCY: What did David and Ellie send?

DOROTHY: Your brother's wife sent a book. As usual.

NANCY: I hope she did better than last Christmas. I'm sorry to say it Momma, but I thought giving you *Self-Help for Singles over Sixty* was in questionable taste.

130 DOROTHY: I think your brother's wife broods on my situation. This one is called (*Reads from the cover*) *Gourmet Banquets for the Solitary Diner*.

NANCY: Speaking of banquets, did you go to your class reunion?

DOROTHY: I did . . .

NANCY: You did? I'm so glad! I thought for sure you'd chicken out.

135 DOROTHY: I wish I had. I got out all my old snapshots of what we looked like in high school, and then I went and saw what we look like now.

NANCY: Did you meet a lot of old friends?

DOROTHY: None I could recognize without their name tags. It was mostly widows. And those few who still had husbands kept them on choke chains. I
140 tell you, Nancy, I looked around that banquet table, and all I could see was baked apples.

Continued

³*Piqued*—irritated

NANCY: No entrée?

DOROTHY: Not the food. The people. We looked like a bunch of old baked apples.

145 NANCY: Baked apples are nice. Hot and steamy—

DOROTHY: Nobody I saw was that. I'm talking leftovers. Skin all puckered and all the sweet goody run to . . . the bottom. So that's why I've got to take you off the speaker, baby. (*Speaks into the receiver*) I need one ear to listen for the oven timer.

150 NANCY: What's cooking?

DOROTHY: My head. I'm coloring my hair . . . no, I won't leave it on too long . . . no . . . Nancy! My hair is as strong as binder twine. It won't fall out. (*A dinging sound*) There! That'll be the timer. Got to dash—What? Look in the freezer for what? . . . Nancy, don't be silly. Why would my glasses be in the freezer? . . . They were in my snow boot because they fell out of a pocket. They couldn't fall into the freezer unless they fell *up* . . . yes, baby, I will lock the door before I shower. I saw *Psycho*⁴ . . . Nancy! I *use* the non-skid mat! . . . kiss-kiss to you too, honey. (*Hangs up*) She couldn't have got that hectoring⁵ quality from me . . .

Suzanne Finlay

Contemporary Canadian playwright

She has worked as an actress, play editor, CBC-TV story editor, playwrights' agent, and television writer.

⁴*Psycho*—An Alfred Hitchcock movie in which a woman is murdered in the shower

⁵hectoring—nagging

IV. Questions 29 to 39 in your Questions Booklet are based on this article.

LOOKING AT THEM LOOKING AT US

Early in October, 1988, three California grey whales were trapped by an early freeze at Point Barrow, Alaska. Their sighting by a hunter, Roy Ahmaogok, eventually led to a joint U.S./Soviet rescue attempt.

Had not the Soviets enlisted in the rescue efforts at Point Barrow, Alaska, public interest in the fate of the whales might have evaporated earlier. But through the middle of the week the story was as good as new, revived by symbolic pictures of a superpower partnership and a concrete place to break the ice. Add that political romance to the visual plight of the animals, poking their armored noses out of man-cut pools, and who could help but stare? To save fellow mammals; to give them air; to offer passage for creatures on a necessary journey. On all that, at least, did the appeal of the story depend.

Then, there was the pure simplicity of the thing. In a week typically characterized by complicated stories about drug-law enforcement, massive corporate mergers, weapons verification, trade and welfare reform, there in a frozen waste swam one clean problem, one clear goal. And, there were the whales themselves. Nothing like

them in the world's imagination. Associated with ferocity in the Bible; with enormity by Milton;¹ with government by Hobbes's² *Leviathan*; with prehistoric power by Melville;³ "He swam the seas before the continents broke water." The Anglo-Saxons called the oceans "whale-roads" in deference to the animals' dominion. A whale rescued Jonah,⁴ one of our own. Point Barrow offered the chance to return the favor.

From the moment the whales were discovered, the rescue efforts were colossal. Helicopters dropping potato mashers onto the ice in the dead-cold night. Chain saws. Ice choppers. Huge nets constructed in factories, as if in a war effort, to airlift the animals if all else failed. In the end, millions of dollars and not a few rubles spent, invoking predictable comments on how that same money might have been more appropriately applied to the trapped people of the world, which is true, as well as the predictable ironic

Continued

¹Milton—John Milton (1608–74), English poet

²Hobbes—Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), English political philosopher

³Melville—Herman Melville (1819–91), American novelist especially noted for the classic masterpiece *Moby Dick*

⁴Jonah—Old Testament prophet who was swallowed by a "great fish"

observations that while two whales
are deliberately saved, others are
deliberately killed, which is also
60 true, or that the Soviets are freeing
whales while discussing the status
of their political prisoners. A
baffled marine biologist remarked,
“This is all out of proportion.”
True, too. And it may be true that a
quasi-technological curiosity was
aroused merely by wondering if the
rescue could be achieved by human
ingenuity.
70 But the deeper attraction of the
story may have lain in what it
showed about the people attracted
by it in the first place. The freeing
of the whales, whatever else it
demonstrated, was a basic fable in
human generosity. Nothing called
for all that human labor, after all,
but an impulse to preserve a couple
of lives and to let them take their
80 course. As the presidential
candidates hunkered down for their
last exchange of insults, people
turned their heads away almost
unconsciously toward two large

animals which, in the abstract, were
nothing larger than found objects of
human affection.

What seems odd about this
general reaction is not that it occurs
90 from time to time but that it goes
away so quickly. Weeks from now,
one will need to be reminded of the
whales, just as one needs to be
reminded of Jessica McClure, the
18-month-old girl caught in a well
shaft in October 1987, or of Kathy
Fiscus, the 3-year-old found dead in
a well pipe in April, 1949, or of the
recurrent stories of coal miners
100 buried by cave-ins below ground.
The analogies are apt only because
of the feelings involved. For the
trapped people, as for the trapped
whales, the nation stopped, waited,
hoped. Then, the incidents were put
away, and with them the observable
fact that people are driven as
naturally to preserve as to destroy.
One might forget that, were it not
110 for the occasional endangered
animals who raise their heads from
the lower depths and cry for help.

Roger Rosenblatt
Contemporary American writer and journalist
He has been a columnist and editor for the *New Republic*
and the *Washington Post*. Since 1980, he has been senior
writer for *Time* and *U.S. News and World Report*.

- V. Following a telephone conversation with her friend, Tracy, Robin wrote Tracy a letter and sent her a copy of Roger Rosenblatt's article about the attempted rescue of whales at Point Barrow, Alaska. Read the first draft of Robin's letter, carefully noting the revisions that she has made. Questions 40 to 46 in your Questions Booklet are based on this letter.

June 12, 1995

Hi Tracy,

Paragraph
1

How about this for being prompt? You phoned yesterday, and here I ^{already} am sending the article I promised. Now, if the post office does its part, you'll have the article in time for your report on threatened species. It was a good thing that my teacher gave me an assignment that was ^{similar to} ~~kind of the same as~~ yours and suggested that I collect news articles that I could use for research. By sharing, we're getting alot out of one article.

Paragraph
2

^{interesting that}
It's ^{kind of funny how} ~~kind of funny how~~ something like whales caught in the ice can get former enemies working together in a rescue attempt, cooperating with each other and acting like friends. It makes you wonder, though, why all the cooperation has to end when the concern about the trapped whales ends. ^{When} ~~But I guess when you~~ consider how long people have been impressed by whales, you can understand why trapped whales would ^{have} ~~of~~ attracted so much attention. Television has certainly affected how we feel about so many things we see in our world. Just imagine how terrifying a gigantic whale thrashing about in the waves ^{have} ~~must of~~ been to sailors ^{animals.} ~~species and now we~~ years ago. People in the past saw whales as ^a ~~a~~ dangerous ~~species and now we~~ are a danger to whales. Isn't that ^{ironic?} ~~see them as an endangered species.~~

Continued

Paragraph
3

In any case, I think that ^{has been} ~~bet~~ Roger Rosenblatt would be pleased with the progress that ^{was made} since he wrote that article. I wonder what he'd say about the whale exhibition we went to at the Provincial Museum when you and your family ^{came} ~~come~~ for Thanksgiving in October of '92? Remember how ^{noisy} ~~noisy~~ those whales ^{were?} ~~were~~. Were they realistic! And what an eye-opener to see just how huge, yet graceful, those creatures ^{could be!} ~~were~~. You took some photos, didn't you? They ^{would} ~~go~~ really ^{well} ~~good~~ with your report; ^{! wouldn't} ~~wouldn't~~ they?

Paragraph
4

Yes, I think Mr. Rosenblatt ^{should} ~~might~~ be pleased with ^{how much} ~~the progress that~~ has been ^{accomplished} ~~going on~~ to save the whales. Did you hear the report that said that some types of whales are actually increasing in numbers? Maybe the next challenges we have to take on are to make the ocean environment safe for the whales and to make our own environment safe for us.

Paragraph
5

Please write back and tell me how your research has gone. I'd also be ^{pleased} ~~interested~~ to receive a copy of ^{your} ~~your~~ report. Who knows? Maybe the two of us can go on ^{our} ~~pooling~~ ^{are} resources in the future.

Take care,

Robin

VI. Questions 47 to 53 in your Questions Booklet are based on this article.

CHRISTMAS OF THE ANTS

I used to live in the south of France, close to the Italian border. One year the Quebec painter Jean Paul Lemieux and his wife and small daughter arrived to spend a winter nearby. Philip Surrey, the Montreal artist, saw to it that we met. It was friendship at first sight; I invited them to Christmas dinner.

5 I have forgotten which of my annual catastrophes immediately struck: was it the time half the tiles fell off the roof? The year of the mudslide? The winter the pipes flooded? The December when the electric wiring was declared a fire hazard? For whatever reason, I had to move out of my house—as always, just before Christmas.

10 A friend who was going away for the holidays lent me a flat in a villa just down the hill, closer to the sea. This was one of the old Riviera mansions, built at about the time of Queen Victoria's visit to the Côte. Peacocks wandered in a stunning garden. There was a water staircase, a series of reflecting pools that gave back the sky and the tropical plants the present owner, a painter and amateur
15 botanist, had brought back from his travels.

In my borrowed flat I had old and attractive furniture, charmingly arranged. I also had a kitchen with nothing in it but a stone sink, a cold water tap, and an antique and terrifying stove. Instead of a refrigerator or even an icebox was a food safe, a large cage covered with fly netting, in which, I supposed, milk spoiled
20 and butter melted. (Is this how the French live? Not quite. The villa, the garden, the peacocks, the exquisite furniture, the miserable kitchens, made up the universe of well-to-do British expatriates¹ before the Second World War. What I was seeing was a surviving fragment of social history: life was for living, kitchens were for servants.)

25 I had my meals out (that kitchen!) and shopped for Christmas dinner at the last minute: stores are open in France until noon on Christmas Day. I wrapped everything in foil—all but the turkey, which I stuffed Canadian-style and left in the food safe while I tried to figure out the stove. The food safe was upon a small table, the legs of which stood in pans of water. The owner of the flat had
30 explained this was so “nothing could climb.” I did not ask *what*, in case reality was worse than anything imagination could provide. When I was ready to put the turkey in the oven, I found it had turned black. In fact, it was covered with a solid coating of ants. The ants, an invading army, poured in under the kitchen door, climbed the wall—avoiding the pans of water—swarmed over the turkey and

Continued

¹expatriates—persons choosing to live away from their native land

35 descended in military file on the far side.

There was no possibility of my finding another turkey. I thought of burying the whole dinner in the garden, next to one of the reflecting pools, and taking my guests to a restaurant, but I knew they would be disappointed. Besides, there was virtually no chance of finding a vacant table anywhere. I looked at the turkey and
40 realized we had to eat the thing.

What would you have done? I put it down on the stone step outside the kitchen door and threw buckets of cold water over it, followed by kettle after kettle of boiling water. Then I dried it with a bathtowel, and created a great flambé over every inch of its surface with brandy, then scotch, and finally, a
45 whole bottle of Armagnac, cupful by cupful.

Later, as I served the dressing, every leaf of thyme, marjoram or savory looked to me like a drowned, scalded, alcohol-soaked and roasted ant. I was afraid someone might ask, "*Mais qu'est-ce que c'est?*"² In fact, the dressing was delicious. After dinner I took Madeleine Lemieux aside and told her what had
50 happened. She laughed and said, "Whatever you do, don't tell my husband. At least, not until after a long, long time."

It was 32 Christmases ago: Jean Paul, now you know.

Mavis Gallant

Contemporary Canadian writer

She was the recipient of the *Canadian Fiction* prize
in 1978 and the Governor-General's award in 1982.

²"*Mais qu'est-ce que c'est?*"—"But what is it?"

VII. Questions 54 to 61 in your Questions Booklet are based on this poem.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

- Beeston, the place, near Nottingham:
We lived there for three years or so.
Each Saturday at two-o'clock
We queued up for the matinée,
5 All the kids for streets around
With snotty noses, giant caps,
Cut down coats and heavy boots,
The natural enemies of cops
And schoolteachers. Profane and hoarse
10 We scrambled, yelled and fought until
The Picture Palace opened up
And we, like Hamelin¹ children, forced
Our bony way into the hall.
That much is easy to recall;
15 Also the reek of chewing-gum,
Gob-stoppers and liquorice,
But of the flickering myths themselves
Not much remains. The hero was
A milky wide-brimmed hat, a shape
20 Astride the arched white stallion;
The villain's horse and hat were black.
Disbelief did not exist
And laundered virtue always won
With quicker gun and harder fist,
25 And all of us applauded it.
Yet I remember moments when
In solitude I'd find myself
Brooding on the sooty man,

Continued

¹Hamelin—"The Pied Piper of Hamelin," a poem for children by Robert Browning. The story of the piper whose music lures away first the rats and then the children of Hamelin.

The bristling villain, who could move
30 Imagination in a way
The well-shaved hero never could,
And even warm the nervous heart
With something oddly close to love.

Vernon Scannell

British poet

He served in the Gordon Highlanders during the
Second World War and has been a professional boxer,
an English teacher, a freelance writer, and a broadcaster.

VIII. Questions 62 to 70 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from a short story.

from MRS. PACKLETIDE'S TIGER

This story takes place in the early 1900s when India was still part of the British Empire.

It was Mrs. Packletide's pleasure and intention that she should shoot a tiger. Not that the lust to kill had suddenly descended on her, or that she felt that she would leave India safer and more wholesome than she had found it, with one fraction less of wild beast per million of inhabitants. The compelling motive for her sudden deviation towards the footsteps of Nimrod¹ was the fact that Loona Bimberton had recently been carried eleven miles in an aeroplane by an Algerian aviator, and talked of nothing else; only a personally procured tiger-skin and a heavy harvest of Press photographs could successfully counter that sort of thing. Mrs. Packletide had already arranged in her mind the lunch she would give at her house in Curzon Street,² ostensibly in Loona Bimberton's honour, with a tiger-skin rug occupying most of the foreground and all of the conversation. She had also already designed in her mind the tiger-claw brooch that she was going to give Loona Bimberton on her next birthday. In a world that is supposed to be chiefly swayed by hunger and by love Mrs. Packletide was an exception; her movements and motives were largely governed by dislike of Loona Bimberton.

Circumstances proved propitious. Mrs. Packletide had offered a thousand rupees for the opportunity of shooting a tiger without overmuch risk or exertion, and it so happened that a neighbouring village could boast of being the favoured rendezvous of an animal of respectable antecedents, which had been driven by the increasing infirmities of age to abandon game-killing and confine its appetite to the smaller domestic animals. The prospect of earning the thousand rupees had stimulated the sporting and commercial instinct of the villagers; children were posted night and day on the outskirts of the local jungle to head the tiger back in the unlikely event of his attempting to roam away to fresh hunting-grounds, and the cheaper kinds of goats were left about with elaborate carelessness to keep him satisfied with his present quarters. The one great anxiety was lest he should die of old age before the date appointed for the memsahib's³ shoot. Mothers carrying their babies home through the jungle after the day's work in the field hushed their singing lest they might curtail the restful sleep of the venerable herd-robber.

Continued

¹Nimrod—great hunter mentioned in the Old Testament

²Curzon Street—street in London, England

³memsahib—(in India) European married woman

30 The great night duly arrived, moonlit and cloudless. A platform had been constructed in a comfortable and conveniently placed tree, and thereon crouched Mrs. Packletide and her paid companion, Miss Mebbin. A goat, gifted with a particularly persistent bleat, such as even a partially deaf tiger might be reasonably expected to hear on a still night, was tethered at the correct distance.

35 With an accurately sighted rifle and a thumbnail pack of patience cards the sportswoman waited the coming of the quarry.

 “I suppose we are in some danger?” said Miss Mebbin.

 She was not actually nervous about the wild beast, but she had a morbid dread of performing an atom more service than she had been paid for.

40 “Nonsense,” said Mrs. Packletide; “it’s a very old tiger. It couldn’t spring up here even if it wanted to.”

 “If it’s an old tiger I think you ought to get it cheaper. A thousand rupees is a lot of money.”

 Louisa Mebbin adopted a protective elder-sister attitude towards money in general, irrespective of nationality or denomination. Her energetic intervention
45 had saved many a rouble from dissipating itself in tips in some Moscow hotel, and francs and centimes clung to her instinctively under circumstances which would have driven them headlong from less sympathetic hands. Her speculations as to the market depreciation of tiger remnants were cut short by the appearance on the scene of the animal itself. As soon as it caught sight of the tethered goat it lay flat
50 on the earth, seemingly less from a desire to take advantage of all available cover than for the purpose of snatching a short rest before commencing the grand attack.

 “I believe it’s ill,” said Louisa Mebbin, loudly in Hindustani, for the benefit of the village headman, who was in ambush in a neighbouring tree.

55 “Hush!” said Mrs. Packletide, and at that moment the tiger commenced ambling towards his victim.

 “Now, now!” urged Miss Mebbin with some excitement; “if he doesn’t touch the goat we needn’t pay for it.” (The bait was an extra.)

60 The rifle flashed out with a loud report, and the great tawny beast sprang to one side and then rolled over in the stillness of death. In a moment a crowd of excited natives had swarmed on to the scene, and their shouting speedily carried the glad news to the village, where a thumping of tom-toms took up the chorus of triumph. And their triumph and rejoicing found a ready echo in the heart of Mrs. Packletide; already that luncheon-party in Curzon Street seemed immeasurably
65 nearer.

 It was Louisa Mebbin who drew attention to the fact that the goat was in death-throes from a mortal bullet-wound, while no trace of the rifle’s deadly work could be found on the tiger. Evidently the wrong animal had been hit, and the beast of prey had succumbed to heart-failure, caused by the sudden report of the

Continued

70 rifle, accelerated by senile decay. Mrs. Packletide was pardonably annoyed at the discovery; but, at any rate, she was the possessor of a dead tiger, and the villagers, anxious for their thousand rupees, gladly connived at the fiction that she had shot the beast. And Miss Mebbin was a paid companion. Therefore did Mrs. Packletide face the cameras with a light heart, and her pictured fame reached from
75 the pages of the *Texas Weekly Snapshot* to the illustrated Monday supplement of *Novoe Vremya*. As for Loona Bimberton, she refused to look at an illustrated paper for weeks, and her letter of thanks for the gift of the tiger-claw brooch was a model of repressed emotions. The luncheon-party she declined; there are limits beyond which repressed emotions become dangerous.

80 From Curzon Street the tiger-skin rug travelled down to the Manor House, and was duly inspected and admired by the county, and it seemed a fitting and appropriate thing when Mrs. Packletide went to the County Costume Ball in the character of Diana.⁴

“How amused every one would be if they knew what really happened,” said
85 Louisa Mebbin a few days after the ball.

“What do you mean?” asked Mrs. Packletide quickly.

“How you shot the goat and frightened the tiger to death,” said Miss Mebbin, with her disagreeably pleasant laugh.

“No one would believe it,” said Mrs. Packletide, her face changing colour as
90 rapidly as though it were going through a book of patterns before post-time.

“Loona Bimberton would,” said Miss Mebbin. Mrs. Packletide’s face settled on an unbecoming shade of greenish white.

“You surely wouldn’t give me away?” she asked.

“I’ve seen a week-end cottage near Dorking⁵ that I should rather like to buy,”
95 said Miss Mebbin with seeming irrelevance. “Six hundred and eighty, freehold. Quite a bargain, only I don’t happen to have the money.”

Louisa Mebbin’s pretty week-end cottage, christened by her “Les Fauves,”⁶ and gay in summer-time with its garden borders of tiger-lilies, is the wonder and admiration of her friends.

100 “It is a marvel how Louisa manages to do it,” is the general verdict.

Mrs. Packletide indulges in no more big-game shooting.

“The incidental expenses are so heavy,” she confides to inquiring friends.

Saki

“Saki” is the pen name of Hector Hugh Munro (1870–1916). He served as a foreign correspondent for the *Morning Post*, a London newspaper, in Russia, the Balkans, and Paris. At the outbreak of the First World War, he joined the 22nd Royal Fusiliers and was killed in action in 1916.

⁴Diana—Roman goddess of hunting

⁵Dorking—a small town near London

⁶“Les Fauves”—the Big Cats

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